



## South Australian Division

### SA Division Report to Air Force Association AGM Canberra 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2021

**Membership** numbers have declined modestly despite new member applications from younger veterans.

**COVID** 19 restrictions have eased. Meetings of Division Councils and branch member meetings have been face-to-face since June 2020. Some “external” meetings including ones called by the opposition spokesman and monthly AF2021 planning meetings have been assisted electronically.

**Constitutional** changes have been accepted by the Division at its AGM in October and by the Elizabeth/Salisbury branch. Both are now Air Force Association. The other separately incorporated branch, Mitcham, will revert to AFA at a near future SGM.

**The Air Force Centenary** has been energetically accepted by the SA community. Regular AF2021 meetings for over a year have planned new commemorative events and amendments to regular ones such as the Anniversary, 31 March, Bomber Command, 5 June and Battle of Britain, 18 September.

**Two books** have been published: “**South Australian Eagles**” by Greg Weller, the force behind SA’s AF2021 planning, and “**The RAAF in SA during WW2**” by Peter Ingman. Peter has published several books on RAAF history. This one describes, for example, the 20,000 tradesmen trained during the war and a radar station on Wedge Island. It lists the 147 RAAF members who died in SA predominantly from training accidents. Greg’s book is not just about aviators. It includes recent SGADF AVM Tracey Smart AO and Martin Tindale SA Museum anthropologist and researcher whose knowledge of written and spoken Japanese language enabled him to identify and predict Japan’s sites and rate of aircraft production.

**Community commemorations** will be held at Mallala, Port Pirie, Salisbury and Moonta. That last, the birthplace of Sir Richard Williams, will include a Ceremony at four cemeteries next week, leading up to Kernewek Lowender, the Cornish Festival, and the unveiling of the sculpture, now pleasingly funded, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August. There will be another Centenary on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August in St Peter’s Cathedral. Last week the Adelaide Lord Mayor Sandy Verschoor, accepted a RAAF ensign as the Freedom of Entry was permitted for Number 24 (City of Adelaide) Squadron. Its CO is WGCDR Alison Tinker. Our DC is Janice Silby; RSL President is Cheryl Cates. It was a day for the girls!

**Commemorative wines** have been purchased from a McLaren Vale winery and relabelled: Dicky Williams Shiraz; Bob Cowper Cabernet Sauvignon; Ross Smith Sauvignon Blanc; Dave Shannon cuvee; Bob Macintosh Port. Sale of bottles will require a separate licence for the Combined ex-Services Mess.

**Co-operation with other ESOs, notably a “Consortium”** of up to 20 have helped in several initiatives and submissions. It is probable that the SA Government will support adding the name “Thailand” to pavements on the Anzac Centenary walk; The Advertiser newspaper has offered to reduce the fee for veteran death notices; the Consortium has continued to object to the misleading claims of the Queensland RSL Arts lottery, that siphons off SA funds; and it has sent a consensus view to the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal on awards for wounds and death from service.

**Council Changes.** At the October Division AGM Greg Weller succeeded retiring Arthur Jeeves as vice-President; Lawrence Ng replaced John Stapleton as Treasurer; two other serving members were elected, FLTLT Brett Armitstead and WOFF David Pyatt. Subcommittees on Governance and By-laws are “work-in-progress” that has been overshadowed by AF2021.



## South Australian Division

Attending **funerals** is an inevitable way of life in our association. The intended discussion on the “Poppy Service”, which we in SA have never adopted, reminds us that we need to ensure that we are notified and asked for our available services and support when a comrade has died. Obtaining family wishes at an appropriate time is the most important objective.

We in SA have become aware of several political initiatives to provide a “one stop shop” or Hub for provision of essential veteran services. One such was developed at the Jamie Larcombe Centre, the Ward 17 surrogate when the Repat was closed two years ago. A month ago the “**Veterans Wellbeing Centre**” at the Repat was opened by the State Minister for Health. The State paid for none of the refurbishment, nor does it fund the services. As these are being considered tenants at the Torrens training Depot (including AFA State Division) are anxious to know what Veterans SA is planning to create a hub where we are tenants or leaseholders. There are three government departments involved, not including DVA.

Robert Black, President Air Force Association, SA Division.